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In re: Anders Leandersson
Appl. No.: 09/656,563
Filed: September 7, 2000
Page 3 of 8

FAX RECEIVED

JAN 17 2003

GROUP 1700

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passing therethrough, the transfer belt being configured to be conveyed through the last nip with the top bleached pulp layer of the fiber web engaging the smooth surface.

REMARKS

In view of the following remarks, reexamination of the present application is respectfully requested. Claims 1-27 are currently pending. In response to the Office Action, Claims 1, 18, 24, and 26 have been amended. The amendments to the claims find support throughout the Specification and the Drawings and no new matter has been added. Accordingly, it is believed that the claims now define patentable subject matter over the prior art cited by the Examiner and notice to such effect is requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1 and 18-23 were rejected in the Office Action as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,792,320 to Kaasalainen et al. In response, Claim 1 and Claim 18, upon which Claims 19-23 depend either directly or indirectly, have been amended to indicate that the fiber web, having a top layer and a base layer, is conveyed through at least one double-felted press nip prior to being conveyed through the last nip, wherein the last nip has a transfer belt passing therethrough and configured such that the smooth surface thereof contacts the top surface of the fiber web through the last nip. Contact between the top surface of the fiber web and the smooth surface of the transfer belt through the last nip serves to enhance the printability of the top layer, as described on Page 6, lines 16-18 of the Specification..

The Kaasalainen '320 reference discloses a method and device for removing water from a paper or board web by pressing. Fig. 6 of the Kaasalainen '320 reference, as cited in the Office Action, shows a multi-layer web former 10A-17A, 11B-15B, wherein the formed web W_{AB} is directed through two pre-press zones PN_1 , PN_2 formed about a press roll 22. The web W_{AB} is then transported between a transfer belt 20 and a water-receiving press fabric 25 through an

In re: Anders Leandersson
Appl. No.: 09/656,563
Filed: September 7, 2000
Page 4 of 8

FAX RECEIVED

JAN 17 2003

GROUP 1700

extended nip NP_1 , formed between upper and lower press rolls 31, 32. Following the extended nip NP_1 , the web W_{AB} is transferred from the transfer belt 20 to a fabric 35 and then to a drying wire 60. The transfer belt 20 does not receive a substantial amount of water and has an outer face which is relatively smooth. Fig. 12 of the Kaasalainen '320 reference, as also cited in the Office Action, shows the formed web W_{AB} being directed through a pre-press zone PN formed about a press roll 22. The web W_{AB} is then transported between a transfer belt 20 and a water-receiving press fabric 25 through an extended nip NP_1 , formed between upper and lower press rolls 31, 32. Following the extended nip NP_1 , the web W_{AB} is transferred from the transfer belt 20 to a drying wire 50.

In contrast and as now claimed, Claims 1 and 18 of the present invention require a fiber web having a top layer and a base layer to be conveyed through at least one double-felted press nip before being conveyed through a last nip, the last nip having a transfer belt with a smooth surface passing therethrough, with the top layer of the fiber web engaging the smooth surface through the last nip. The Kaasalainen '320 reference does not teach a double-felted press nip preceding a last nip in which the top layer of the fiber web engages the smooth surface of a transfer fabric passing through the last nip. As such, the Applicant submits that Claims 1 and 18, as amended, are not anticipated by the Kaasalainen '320 reference.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 2-17 and 24-27 were rejected in the Office Action as being unpatentable over the Kaasalainen '320 reference. In response, Claim 1, upon which Claims 2-17 depend either directly or indirectly, Claim 24, upon which Claim 25 depends, and Claim 26, upon which Claim 27 depends, have been amended to indicate that the fiber web, having a top layer and a base layer, is conveyed through at least one double-felted press nip prior to being conveyed through the last nip, wherein the last nip has a transfer belt passing therethrough and configured such that the smooth surface thereof contacts the top surface of the fiber web through the last nip, and

In re: Anders Leandersson
Appl. No.: 09/656,563
Filed: September 7, 2000
Page 5 of 8

FAX RECEIVED

JAN 17 2003

GROUP 1700

whereby contact between the top surface of the fiber web and the smooth surface of the transfer belt, through the last nip, serves to enhance the printability of the top layer.

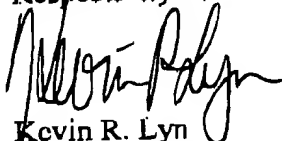
As previously discussed, the Kaasalainen '320 reference does not teach a double-felted press nip preceding a last nip in which the top layer of the fiber web engages the smooth surface of a transfer fabric passing through the last nip. In addition, the Kaasalainen '320 reference does not suggest or provide motivation for such a configuration. Accordingly, the Applicant further submits that Claims 1, 24, and 26, as amended, define patentable subject matter over the Kaasalainen '320 reference.

In summary, the Kaasalainen '320 patent does not teach, suggest, or provide motivation for the embodiments of the present invention as now claimed. Accordingly, in view of these differences between the Applicant's invention and the Kaasalainen '320 patent, it is submitted that embodiments of the present invention, as defined by Claims 1-27, are patentable over the Kaasalainen '320 patent cited in the Office Action. As such, Claims 1-27 are believed to be in condition for immediate allowance.

In conclusion, for the reasons set forth above, the Applicant submits that all claims now pending are in condition for immediate allowance. Accordingly, notice to such effect is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest opportunity.

It is not believed that extensions of time or fees for net addition of claims are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 CFR § 1.136(a), and any fee required therefore (including fees for net addition of claims) is hereby authorized to be charged to Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

Respectfully submitted,



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In re: Anders Leandersson
Appl. No.: 09/656,563
Filed: September 7, 2000
Page 7 of 8

OFFICIAL**FAX RECEIVED**

JAN 17 2003

GROUP 1700**Version with Markings to Show Changes Made:**

Please amend Claims 1, 18, 24, and 26 as follows:

1. (Amended) A method of producing a liner, said method comprising:

forming a fiber web in a forming section having at least two forming units, the fiber web comprising at least a top layer and a base layer; and
conveying the fiber web from the forming section through a press section and to a drying section, the press section comprising [a plurality of rolls, with at least two of the rolls being adjacently disposed so as to form] at least one double-felted press nip preceding a last nip, [therebetween, and] the last nip having a transfer belt [having] with a smooth surface passing therethrough, the transfer belt being configured to be conveyed through the last nip with the top layer of the fiber web engaging the smooth surface.

18. (Amended) A papermaking device for producing a liner, said device comprising:
a forming section having at least two forming units for forming a fiber web having at least a top layer and a base layer; and

a press section for receiving the fiber web from the forming section and conveying the fiber web to a drying section, the press section comprising:
[a plurality of rolls having at least two of the rolls being adjacently disposed so as to form a last nip therebetween] at least one double-felted press nip preceding a last nip; and
a transfer belt having a smooth surface, the transfer belt being configured to be conveyed through the last nip with the top layer of the fiber web engaging the smooth surface.

In re: Anders Leandersson
Appl. No.: 09/656,563
Filed: September 7, 2000
Page 8 of 8

OFFICIAL
FAX RECEIVED

JAN 17 2003

GROUP 1700

24. (Amended) A method of producing a liner, said method comprising:
forming a fiber web in a forming section having at least two forming units, the fiber web comprising at least a top bleached pulp layer and [an] a base unbleached pulp layer; and
conveying the fiber web from the forming section through a press section and to a drying section, the press section comprising [a plurality of rolls, with at least two of the rolls being adjacently disposed so as to form] at least one double-felted press nip preceding a last nip, [therebetween, and] the last nip having a transfer belt [having] with a smooth surface passing therethrough, the transfer belt being configured to be conveyed through the last nip with the top bleached pulp layer of the fiber web engaging the smooth surface.

26. (Amended) A method of producing a liner, said method comprising:
forming a fiber web in a forming section having at least two forming units, the fiber web comprising at least a top bleached pulp layer having at least 30 weight-% of short fiber and [an] a base unbleached layer having substantially all long fiber; and
conveying the fiber web from the forming section through a press section and to a drying section, the press section comprising [a plurality of rolls, with at least two of the rolls being adjacently disposed so as to form] at least one double-felted press nip preceding a last nip, [therebetween, and] the last nip having a transfer belt [having] with a smooth surface passing therethrough, the transfer belt being configured to be conveyed through the last nip with the top bleached pulp layer of the fiber web engaging the smooth surface.